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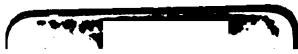
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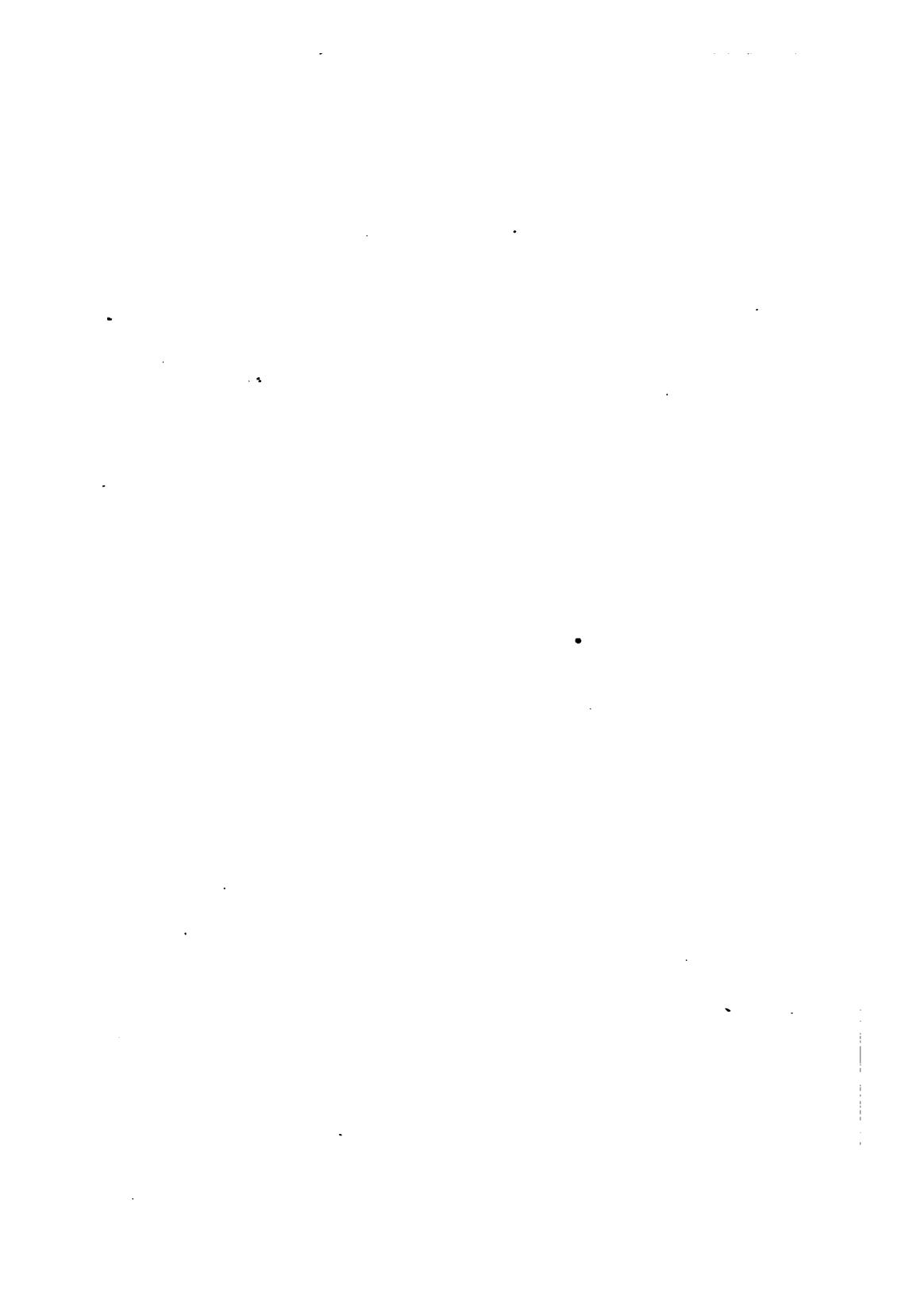
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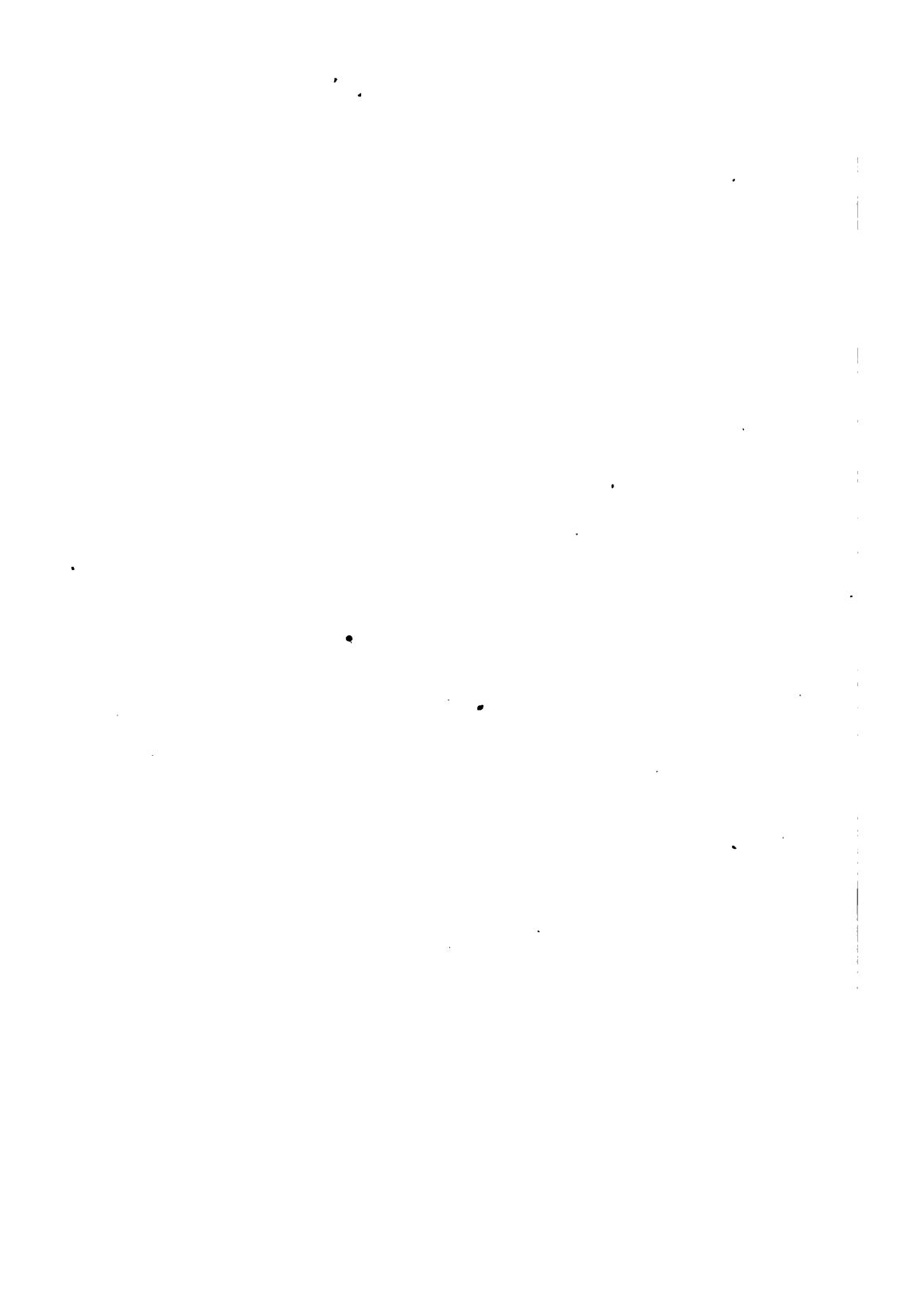
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“Vivimus Vincere.”

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THE INCORPORATION  
OF  
TUNBRIDGE WELLS. 13

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1885.  
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All Communications having reference to Incorporation to  
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E. WAYMARK,

*Hon. Secretary,*

104, CALVERLEY ROAD,

TUNBRIDGE WELLS.

# The Incorporation of Tunbridge Wells.

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IT is proposed in the following pages to briefly point out to the Ratepayers of Tunbridge Wells some of the defects in the present system of town government, and to impress upon them the wisdom of continuing to agitate for a Charter of Incorporation.

Considering that, so recently as last year, 2,403 householders desired the town to be Incorporated, and that only 1,134 householders opposed the change, it is hard to understand why the Privy Council refused to grant the prayer of the petition. But the refusal of the Privy Council does not alter the circumstances of the case. The arguments in favour of Incorporation remain as sound, the evidence is as overwhelming, and the public feeling is stronger than ever.

It is unquestioned that the system of town government under the Municipal Corporation Acts is a higher and better one than under a Local Board, and it ought to be equally unquestioned that Tunbridge Wells is important enough and populous enough to have the best known form of town administration. The fact of a minority of the inhabitants being content to live under an inferior system of government is no reason why the majority should be satisfied with anything less than the best. If the number of supporters on each side were reversed, if 1,134 householders desired a change, and 2,403 were opposed to it, the question, after recent events, might be considered settled for some considerable time to come, but so long as the large majority of the inhabitants hold the opinions they do, it would be the rankest cowardice not to endeavour to carry forward their wishes to a successful issue.

## THE SYSTEM OF PLURAL VOTING

is, in the opinion of the advocates of Incorporation, one of the great defects in the government of Tunbridge Wells. Instead of each ratepayer having only one vote, he has one or more

votes proportionate to the size of the house he lives in. For example, if he lives in a house rated at :

			VOTES.
Under £50 per year he has		...	1
" £100 "	"	...	2
" £150 "	"	...	3
" £200 "	"	...	4
" £250 "	"	...	5
" £300 "	"	...	6

In addition to this, the *Owner* of a house, without paying a single penny to the rate-collector, has the same voting power as the man who occupies the house, so that, as in many cases in Tunbridge Wells, a man who both owns and occupies a house assessed at over £250 a year, has 12 votes, and disfranchises by his voting power 11 men living in houses assessed at under £50 a year each. To give a forcible illustration of the practical working of the system, it may be stated that there are 50 householders in Tunbridge Wells, who have more voting power than 500 other householders who live in houses at rentals varying from £30 to £50 per annum !

Such a system has only to be judged by reason, and measured by any standard of right to be at once condemned. It is true that the rich man pays more into the town purse, in the form of rates, than the poor man, but more is paid out on his account. He lives, in many cases, in a mansion with a large frontage to the street, and this represents a great area of sidewalk to be kept in order and asphalted, roads to be kept up for his benefit, on which his horses may prance and his carriages roll ; it represents a proportionably large expenditure for lighting and watering the streets, for police surveillance, and for many charges in connection with keeping the town in good order. The poorer man, living in a small house in a crowded street, contributes, for the space he occupies in the town, a larger amount of taxes, and receives infinitely fewer advantages from them than his richer townsman ; the amount of taxes he has to pay is a far greater consideration to him, and it is most unjust that in addition to the large advantages the rich man receives from the town expenditure, he should have such a monstrous voting power.

In elections to the House of Commons,

**EVERY VOTER HAS AN EQUAL VOTE,**

and it is impossible to give any good reason why in the choice of a representative to take part in managing the affairs of a town, the one man twelve votes system should be allowed to exist, seeing that in the more important matter of the choice of a representative to legislate on matters of Imperial concern, and to regulate the financial affairs of a great Empire, the system of one man one vote is universally acknowledged to be right and just.

**PLURALITY VOTING AT ELECTIONS.**

In April, 1884, an election was held to fill eight vacancies at the Local Board. Eight candidates were nominated by those who opposed Incorporation, and five by those who supported it. The following was the official return of the polling under the plurality system, the last five being the Incorporation candidates :—

1.	Wigg	...	...	...	3277
2.	Cheverton	...	...	...	3228
3.	Walker	...	...	...	3058
4.	Ladds	...	...	...	2949
5.	Weekes	...	...	...	2947
6.	Drake	...	...	...	2941
7.	Reeves	...	...	...	2668
8.	Collins	...	...	...	2641
<hr/>					
9.	Tracy	...	...	...	1796
10.	Wilmot	...	...	...	1716
11.	Waymark	...	...	...	1552
12.	Putland	...	...	...	1523
13.	Irving	...	...	...	1470

If the town had been incorporated, and the one man one vote system been in operation, the following would have been the result of the poll :—

1.	Tracy	...	...	...	1648
2.	Wilmot	...	...	...	1583
3.	Waymark	...	...	...	1512
4.	Putland	...	...	...	1455
5.	Cheverton	...	...	...	1422
6.	Irving	...	...	...	1401
7.	Wigg	...	...	...	1396
8.	Drake	...	...	...	1289
<hr/>					
9.	Walker	...	...	...	1274
10.	Weekes	...	...	...	1264
11.	Ladds	...	...	...	1208
12.	Reeves	...	...	...	1106
13.	Collins	...	...	...	1035

So that while under the plurality system, Mr. Wigg headed the poll with a majority of 1481 over Mr. Tracy, under the system of voting which experience has proved to be the only fair and just one, Mr. Tracy would have headed the poll with a majority of 252 over Mr. Wigg.

In this present month of April, 1885, an election was held to fill nine vacancies at the Local Board. There were fourteen candidates, and it will be interesting to notice how different the results of the election would have been under the two systems.

PLURALITY VOTING.		INDIVIDUAL VOTING.	
Barton ...	2,570	Argyle ...	1,196
Pink ...	2,446	Pink ...	1,183
Jackson ...	2,405	Jackson ...	1,133
Delves ...	2,199	Barton ...	1,129
Hogbin ...	1,922	Strange ...	1,070
Reed ...	1,902	Clifford ...	1,052
Colls ...	1,820	Waymark ...	943
Spencer ...	1,798	Hogbin ...	939
Argyle ...	1,767	Delves ...	934
Marshall ...	1,651	Spencer ...	827
Strange ...	1,595	Howard ...	790
Clifford ...	1,463	Reed ...	737
Waymark ...	1,202	Colls ...	716
Howard ...	1,120	Marshall ...	596

Three members who now occupy seats at the Board would have been rejected by large majorities, three of those who are rejected would have been elected by large majorities, and the electors would have been saved the burlesque of seeing a candidate for whom only 596 people voted, being pitchforked into the Board over the heads of men for whom 1,070 ratepayers recorded their votes.

#### THE EVIL OF PAPER VOTING.

The mode of procedure of voting by paper is the worthy offspring of plurality voting. When an election for the Local Board takes place, a contingent of men and boys, often of all sorts and sizes, are supposed to leave a voting paper at each voter's house, and to give notice of the day on which it is to be called for. This paper contains a printed list of the candidates, and the voter is supposed to place his initials opposite the names of those for whom he wishes to vote, and to sign the paper. If

the collector does not call on the day named, the voter, if he wishes to have his vote recorded, must personally deliver the paper to the Returning Officer on the day of election. It would be interesting and amusing to give some details of the blunders which are made in filling up these papers, but there is only space for hard facts and figures. Let the statistics of the numbers of papers sent out, used and disqualified, speak for themselves.

			1884	1885
Voting papers sent out	...	...	<u>4,820</u>	<u>4,596</u>
Properly filled up	...	...	2,707	1,755
Disqualified	...	...	294	438
Not signed	...	...	935	1,356
Uncollected	...	...	884	1,047
			<u>4,820</u>	<u>4,596</u>

Considering that the town has increased in size during the past year, it is remarkable to notice that 224 fewer voting papers were sent out in 1885 than in 1884, but under such a system, perhaps nothing ought to create surprise.

It will be noticed that in 1884 there were 294 ratepayers, and in 1885 no less than 438 ratepayers, who wished to record their votes, but who were disqualified from so doing ; and that in 1884, 884 voting papers, and in 1885, 1,047 voting papers, or nearly one-fourth of the whole, were never collected. How complex the system is, and how liable men of ordinary intellect and education are to make mistakes may be fairly illustrated by the fact that amongst those disqualified are to be found the names of the Marquis of Abergavenny, Sir David Salomons, Rev. Canon Hoare, Messrs. Beeching, the Bankers, and Major Lutwidge. The sooner such a system is reformed out of existence the better it will be for the good government of the town.

#### ELECTIONEERING INFLUENCES AND TACTICS.

But a few plain words must be spoken about other influences which have to do with the present subject. Everyone knows of the social influences which are at work in Tunbridge Wells. There is in the neighbourhood a great landowner, who virtually rules a certain section of the townspeople. The eyes of everybody, who is anybody, are turned to him. What he thinks they

think ; what he does they try to do ; what he says, and he says very little, they say. Public opinion, that is, independent public opinion, cannot be said to exist in this section of the town. Their leader is the bell wether, after whom the flock frantically rush, and if he were to decide to enter the green pastures of Incorporation, all fashionable Tunbridge Wells would be over the hedge after him. But it unfortunately happens that this great man is opposed to all change in the present form of government, everybody who supposes himself to be somebody is necessarily opposed to all change, and stands obedient to be marched, counter-marched, wheeled to the right, to the left, or to the right-about-face, as orders from superior officers are issued. The wirepullers, under whose control these evolutions are carried out, have, by experience and training, acquired great proficiency in their operations. They bring this force of fashionable plurality votes to bear upon the elections whenever candidates are brought forward who will not promise to vote or talk exactly to order, and the result is that residents who never at any other time take any interest in the affairs of the town, who know nothing about the wishes or feelings of the townspeople, who do not know Candidate Brown from Candidate Smith, vote exactly as the wire-pullers direct them ; and any man on two legs, or, indeed, without either legs or brains, could be elected to the Local Board if this section of the townspeople, comparatively small in numbers, but powerful in plurality voting, were to put forth their strength. To call voting Representation under the circumstances that have been mentioned is a farce ; it is a toy for children to play with, not a power for men to use. Better far for the townspeople to banish from their minds all discontent, all feelings of anger, every honest emotion at the present rotten condition of affairs, and to agree to despotic power being placed in the hands of the handful of men who now virtually possess it, than to honour such a system, worked in such a way, by the name of Representative Government.

#### THE OWNERS' VOTES.

Under Incorporation all owners as owners will be disfranchised. If a man lives in the house he owns, he will, as a matter of course, have the same voting power as every other taxpayer, but it is hard to understand upon what principle of

justice the man or woman living, say in Paris or Brussels, who owns a house in Tunbridge Wells, and who pays nothing to the town rates, should have the same voting power as the tenant of the house who lives in the town, and is a large contributor to the rates. Under Incorporation, men, not empty houses, as is at present the case, will be represented at the Council. Taxation without Representation is an injustice against which men have continually raised their voices, but this plan of Representation without Taxation is even more unjust and absurd.

#### OPEN VOTING.

Under Incorporation open voting will be done away with. Any ratepayer can, under the present system, go to the Town Hall, at any time within six months of the Local Board Election, examine the voting papers, and see how every voter has recorded his vote. Objectionable at any time, it is monstrous and indefensible when the rich people as a class take one side of a question and the poorer people the other, and when there is a disposition and practice on the part of the upper classes to put forth their power to mould and influence the votes of those with whom they deal, or to whom they give employment. Experience has proved that the Ballot is the best system that has yet been devised to enable a voter to exercise his honest convictions, and this freedom from social pressure will not be the least of the benefits that Incorporation will bring in its smiling train.

#### DIVISION INTO WARDS.

When the town is Incorporated it will be divided into Wards. Each District will have its own representatives at the Council Board, who will look especially to the requirements and wants of the District they represent. The advantages of such a division of labour are apparent. At present what is everybody's business is nobody's business, but in the new order of things, when rate-payers have complaints to make or improvements to suggest, they will have their own representative to whom they can authoritatively apply, and in those days there will be no such scandals, as at present exist, of large districts of the town being unrepresented in the governing body.

**THE LOCAL BOARD AND ITS PERFORMANCES.**

A change in the Government of the town is demanded on the grounds of the unjust system on which elections are conducted—a change might with great reason be demanded, on the ground that the record of the Local Board is a record of mismanagement, incompetence, and extravagance. Only the barest facts can be given :—

**THE TOWN DEBT.**—In 1864, the *total debt* of the town was £3,070 : it is now over £260,000.

**THE WATER WORKS.**—The plurality voters have succeeded in obtaining a private water act for Tunbridge Wells, which, for gross injustice, has rarely been paralleled ; and here, as in all other matters, the rich have spared themselves at the expense of the trading and working classes. The details of the Act have so often been criticised and made public, that the chief abuses and inequalities will be fresh in the recollection to all.

The Waterworks were originally estimated to cost £32,000. They have already cost over £150,000, and the townspeople will do well to remember the scarcity of water last year, when it was impossible to obtain sufficient for pressing domestic uses. Had the arrangement now in force with the Town Surveyor to superintend what is called the completion of the works, and to pay him, in addition to his fixed salary, a commission of 5 per cent. upon the outlay, been entered into in an Incorporated town, it would have been characterised as jobbery of the worst kind.

**THE SCHEME FOR DRAINING** the town was originally estimated to cost £30,000, but through vacillation and incompetence the cost to the ratepayers is already over £80,000, and it seems to be generally accepted that many thousands of pounds will be required to complete the works.

**THE LEGAL EXPENSES** from 1865 to 1883 were over £22,000, being over £1,200 per year, so that it is easy to understand why some of the lawyers are in love with the present state of affairs.

**THE LOCAL BOARD AND ITS ABILITIES.**

A great deal has been said about the high character of all present and all past commissioners. Let this be granted. They are all honest men, but they are not all the honest men in the

town. It is not possible to suppose that they are so surfeited with self-esteem as to think that other men, with abilities as magnificent, with powers of administration as great, are not to be found, and that amongst the 26,000 inhabitants there are not sufficient honest men to form one, two, or even a dozen Local Boards. There are on the Board estimable men, just as there are a lot of ciphers, but when any monopoly of ability is claimed for them, let the townspeople scan the list of members and judge for themselves. Incorporation will at least encourage the choice of men of independence, who, it must be confessed, are but thinly represented in the present body.

#### THE NATURAL ADVANTAGES OF THE TOWN.

Tunbridge Wells is a beautiful town, but not because it is governed by a Local Board. It would be as reasonable for the Town Council of Buffalo to claim personal fame for the grandeur of Niagara Falls, or for the Administration of Chamounix to take individual credit for the majesty of Mont Blanc, as for the Local Board to persuade people that Tunbridge Wells is attractive because of plurality voting. No. When Incorporation comes, as come it will, the gorse on the Common will still be beautiful in its golden glory, the fine panorama of hill and dale will still rejoice the visitor as he stands on the mountain top, and the air, after having made its way from the sea, over Southern Down and Sussex meadow land, will be as bracing and as health-restoring as it is to-day. But it is possible that these attractions might be supplemented by others which would add to the pleasure of both visitors and residents. Situated as Tunbridge Wells is, within such easy distance of London, Brighton, Eastbourne, and Hastings, it is singularly adapted for a summer resort, and, when Incorporation comes, it is not unlikely that steps would be taken to make its attractions and advantages more widely known. The town would be the property of the people as a whole; there would be that general interest in its prosperity which a sense of ownership brings; and there would be a united effort to improve and beautify it. Such a thing as a public park might be acquired; the townspeople might consider it wise to have a free library and reading room; a museum might be established; as there are springs of repute, so there might be a spa worthy of them; a band stand and

promenade might not be impossible improvements ; tennis grounds and a good cricket ground might come into existence ; and art and invention might aid with their powers the attractiveness of a town which Nature has so richly endowed. Shopkeepers might not object to an increase of custom, mechanics to an increase of work, hotels and lodging-house keepers to more numerous guests ; and if, in addition to this, the town were better governed, and the streets better swept and watered, it is hard to see how the comfort of the residents would be in any way imperilled by these and other changes of a similar character.

#### HAS INCORPORATION PROVED A SUCCESS IN OTHER TOWNS ?

Some of the opponents of Incorporation are anxious to have the question decided on the ground of the material benefits that will follow the change. If there were no other advantage but that of giving the town a fair system of voting, the desired change would be worth a great effort to secure. But this is not all. Other towns bear witness to the benefits of Incorporation.

In reply to the question : "Are there any advantages gained by the change?"

The Town Clerk of Brighton replied, "Yes."

The Town Clerk of Burslem : "Yes, increased *prestige* and influence, additional powers under the Municipal Corporations Acts, and greater interest of the burgesses in town affairs."

The Town Clerk of Southport—"Many, but space and time will not permit me to go into them."

The Chairman of the Bench of the Croydon Magistrates, who had previously opposed the change, publicly stated that the town was managed in a much better manner under a Town Council than under a Local Board.

The Town Clerk of the Borough of Croydon, in giving his evidence before the Hon. T. W. H. Pelham, at Tunbridge Wells, said :—"There are many gentlemen who would become Mayors if asked, who would never have anything to do with a Local Board. The audit generally is much better. In local matters generally there is much interest evinced. The members have more knowledge of details under a Council than under a Local Board ; more direct touch with the ratepayers."

Mr. Nevill Strange, a Member of the Eastbourne Town Council, in giving evidence, said that "in Eastbourne Incorporation has

been an improvement on the old state of things. The people are well satisfied. Since Incorporation the opponents of the measure have expressed their pleasure at the change having taken place. There has been no increase in the rates."

Mr. Joseph Farncombe, of Lewes and Eastbourne, Alderman of Lewes, said :—"The effect of Incorporation at Lewes has been a decided improvement in the general appearance of the town, and an advantage in many ways. Incorporation is popular. The total rates are less." "The plural voting was one of the great objections at Eastbourne before Incorporation. The rich residents are now generally satisfied with having one vote."

Only the limit of space prevents the indefinite multiplication of evidence of this kind, which must close with an extract from the *Croydon Advertiser* of December 29th, 1883. "Croydon has everything to be thankful for to the men who, through good and evil report, took up what seemed at first a hopeless task, and carried the movement through to success. Such a matter as a discussion on the results of the movement is now out of the question. The bitterest opponents of Incorporation before the Charter was granted, have not a word now to say against it, and it is conceded on all sides that the change from a Board of Health to a Municipal Council has proved to be the greatest blessing ever conferred on the town. Notwithstanding this experience, *and the experience of every other newly-incorporated town*, there are persons in Tunbridge Wells who persistently oppose the movement which has been commenced for sharing in the advantages which we already enjoy. . . . If there are any gentlemen in Tunbridge Wells who are as madly opposed to Incorporation as were some of our old obstructionists, let them come up to Croydon and learn the whole truth, and they will go back to the Wells much relieved by their visit, edified by the facts, converted by the figures, and restored to sanity by the prospects for Incorporation, in the movement for which they will only be too glad to join."

#### IMMEDIATE ACTION NECESSARY.

It is said that the present time is not opportune, and that there should be patient waiting, until those who oppose Incorporation come to a proper state of mind. Wait ! What for ? For the time when the plurality voters are content to give up their power ?

The crack of doom will come before the working of such a miracle. There is nothing to be gained by delay—everything to be lost ; and since the matter has to be steadily fought out, it can best be done by those who have already devoted to the cause so much thought, time, and labour.

#### MEASURES, NOT MEN.

When the ratepayers decide the question, let their decision be based on the justice and advantages of Incorporation. Efforts will be made on the lines of abusing the plaintiff's Attorney to divert public attention from the question itself to the low social position, and the uncouthness of its advocates. It would be pleasant for the advocates of Incorporation to have Lord Somebody This in the chair of the League, for Sir Nobody That to be a staunch and loyal ally, and for the Right Rev. the Dean of High Brooms to smile his blessing upon the cause. But if this aristocratic and ecclesiastic assistance cannot be obtained, the battle must be fought without it. The cause is not any the less just because these forces are absent, nor would the facts be changed, or the justice of the case be more vivid if a Duke and an Archbishop supported the movement. When men are brought face to face with any great evil, they do not, if they are true men, remain inactive until they enlist the sympathies of ideal allies, or wait until there is an ideal combination of favourable circumstances to overturn the wrong-doing. So in the matter of the rottenness and injustice of the government of Tunbridge Wells. If rich men will not expose the injustice, poor men must put forth their strength ; if men of culture, of " light and leading," will not become standard-bearers in a just cause, men of obscurity, it may be, but none the less of independence, of courage, and of honesty, must take their places at the head of the column, and move onward to the attack. When the system is destroyed, the work of the Incorporationists will be finished. Although anxious for justice, and determined to have it, they are not seekers after Municipal honours and their duties will cease when the present representation of bricks and mortar is swept away, and the one man one vote system set up.

#### THE MEANS TO THE END.

The advocates of Incorporation have no secrets as to the means they propose to use to bring success to the cause they have

at heart. By the formation of a League of all ratepayers favourable to Incorporation they hope to bring about that concerted action and organisation which in movements of this character are almost essential to success. By all legitimate means, by argument, by advocacy in the Press, by the holding of public meetings, they trust to arouse a feeling of sympathy with their efforts, and a feeling of indignation against the system they have determined to overthrow. They hope to gain strength from a large class of ratepayers who, up to the present time have taken no part in the controversy ; who, standing between the two opposing parties, have maintained their neutrality to the question at issue, interesting themselves but little, and doing less to bring about a final solution of it. The advocates of Incorporation appeal to this class with confidence, believing that these

#### MEN OF MODERATION

will examine for themselves the facts of the case, and, being fair and just men, will become earnest allies.

#### TO ALL MEN OF PROGRESSIVE OPINIONS

this movement should have an interest and attraction. By almost the united voice of the country a large body of men are about to exercise, for the first time, the voting power which is justly theirs ; and it seems illogical and absurd that men should be willing to concede to the labourer in the agricultural districts an equal vote, and be unwilling to concede the same equality to the artizan who lives in the same town, and the same street, as themselves. There will doubtless be

#### OPPOSITION TO THE END.

The aristocratic gentleman of the Good Old School, who believes that the common people were made to be ruled, and that people with money were divinely ordained to rule them, will conscientiously continue to think that the one man twelve votes system is a model and perfect one. The commercial gentleman of the New School, who moved to Tunbridge Wells because it was so quiet, and so very respectable, who thinks it was made for his exclusive use, whose principal interest in the town is having a fast train from it in the morning, and a faster train

back to it in the evening, will protest very loudly against the new order of things. Yet these two representatives of different classes of people may be surprised to find how little Incorporation will have changed the position of affairs. The gentleman with old-fashioned views will have lost eleven of his votes, and will have to be satisfied with the same voting power as the labouring man who lives under the shadow of his great mansion ; but if he will use his abilities and money wisely, all jealousies and dissatisfactions having been swept away, he will obtain a larger and higher influence than he ever before possessed. And the man who came for quiet will find that equal voting has not changed the character of the town or the habits of the people, neither has it crowded the Common with "trippers," nor deluged the streets with German bands.

#### THE WISDOM OF CONCESSION.

It would be better for the interests of the town if those in authority would accept the inevitable, and withdraw their opposition to a Charter being granted. Instead of discord, there would be unity ; and instead of war, peace. The differences of opinion would soon be forgotten in a determined resolution to look only to the future, and to work unanimously together to promote the best interests of all classes of the people, whatever their position or calling. But if the opponents of Incorporation declare that

#### "No COMPROMISE "

is their watchword, the advocates of Incorporation will neither faint nor despond. "We live to conquer" ("Vivimus Vincere") is the motto of the Incorporation League. In that faith the battle will be waged. The system attacked is a century too old for the times in which it exists—it has no recuperative power, no principle of equity, no sentiment of nobleness on which to rest—and if those who are in favour of Incorporation will continue persistent in the expression of their convictions, and loyally unite in any joint action that may be decided upon, there can be but little doubt of an early and complete success attending their efforts.

